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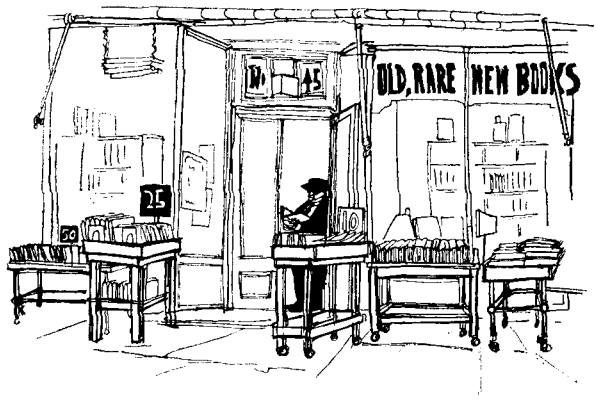
THE ASSAULT ON CULTURE
—An Editorial

THE Commonweal

Fall Book Issue



SEYMOUR KRIM
WALTER KERR
PATRICK F. QUINN
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MEMORIES OF SANTAYANA

Richard Butler

olume LVII, Number 3 October 24, 1952 Twenty Cents

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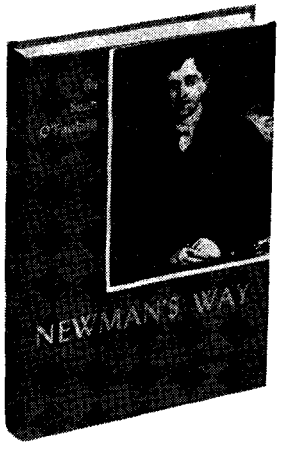
DEVIN-ADAIR books for fall



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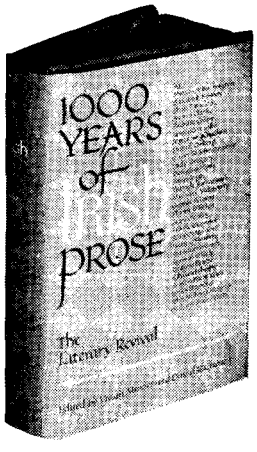

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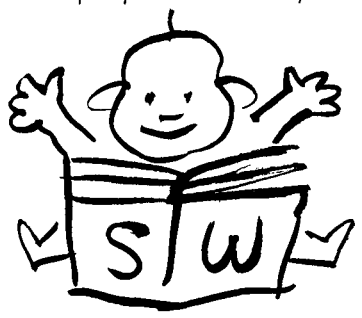
We're publishing pretty good books in our old age*

(if you don't know what we've been doing this Fall, you can't have been reading the **Commonweal** with proper attention).



But we are still very fond of some of the wonderful books we published when we were younger, which, bless their hearts, go on selling, year after year, in spite of never getting a line of advertising. There's Chesterton's **ST. THOMAS AQUINAS** ($3.00) which we say modestly is a very good introduction to St. Thomas (Gilson and Maritain went much further, saying it was the best book on St. Thomas they knew of). And what about Father Alfred Wilson's **PARDON AND PEACE** ($2.75), still the best all-round book on the Sacrament of Penance? Not to mention F. J. Sheed's **THEOLOGY AND SANITY** ($3.00) and its elder (but much smaller) brother **A MAP OF LIFE** ($2.00), both of which have brought the Faith to life for so many people, Father Gerald Vann's **THE DIVINE PITY** ($2.75) is another of these everlasting books and so is Caryll Houselander's **REED OF GOD** ($2.25). We could go on like this for hours, especially with a whole page to fill up, but you get the idea: we are fond of our older children, and grateful to them for their help in supporting us in our old age.

However, we probably ought to say something about the new Fall books you haven't heard about yet—after all this is the Fall Books Number.

On October 8th we published **CONFLICT AND LIGHT,** edited by Father Bruno de Jesus Marie ($2.75), in which priests, psychiatrists and doctors try throwing a little light on each other's problems. It's hard for us to tell how successful they are, but no doubt priests, psychiatrists and doctors will be telling us in due course. (No time for reviews yet). The same day, just to show how true it is about the step being short from the sublime to the ridiculous, we published **DADDY FELL INTO THE POND and Other Rhymes for Children** by Alfred Noyes ($2.00). Only a really good poet would dare be as pleasantly silly as Mr. Noyes is in this book: remember it for Christmas, but don't buy it too soon or you may not still have it to give away. In November we shall bring out **SHAKESPEARE AND CATHOLICISM** by Heinrich Mutschmann and Karl Wentersdorf ($6.00), two German scholars who have dug up, sorted and put together all the evidence available about Shakespeare's religion. It has the same kind of fascination as a really good detective story. The only other November book is **CHAUCER** by Raymond Preston ($4.50), written to persuade us that the effort required to learn to read Chaucer is nothing compared to the fun you can have after you have made it. This is very pleasantly illustrated.

That leaves only the one Knox of the season: **A COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPELS** ($3.75), something which we think Msgr. Knox may safely be said to be qualified to write by this time.

***Well, fairly old**

We hope your bookstore will see some results from all this. Lucy MacGill is happy to send the Trumpet, free and postpaid, to everyone who asks for it, but you might remember that she is not clairvoyant about changes of address.

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THE COMMONWEAL
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THE Commonweal

week by week

THE ASSAULT ON CULTURE

A NUMBER of influential European publications, as ideologically diverse as the British socialist *New Statesman and Nation* and the French Catholic *Esprit,* have deplored the cultural "reign of terror" which they believe exists in the United States. In this they have been joined by some influential Americans, most recently by James Thurber and Arthur Miller. These two artists, writing in the New York *Times,* have expressed deep and angry concern lest that "climate of fear" they see threatening America should stifle the nation's native genius: the willingness to risk; to be bold, unorthodox and, if necessary, unpopular in intellectual and artistic experiment.

These fears for the continued vitality and independence of American culture have, in spite of the frequency of their expression, remained largely minority fears. The majority of Americans, even those who, like ourselves, are unalterably opposed to the methods of the junior Senator from Wisconsin, have been unable to take seriously the more extreme charges of either the foreign or domestic Cassandras. The contradictory evidence has seemed both too immediate and too strong.

The very fact, for example, that even the most violent castigations of the United States as a crypto-fascist force in the postwar world have received, and continue to receive, a wide, free, and sometimes enthusiastic hearing in America, has seemed in itself a sufficiently strong rebuke to strictures against the climate of our culture.

The ancient laws of action and reaction work in the area of ideas as well as in the realm of physics, and so, it has seemed, the minority hysteria of McCarthyism on the right has produced a counter hysteria on the left. As a result, for those who see a Communist in every liberal there are others who see a fascist in every conservative. The visions of each appear to most responsible Americans about equally myopic, and they have rejected both.

But a rejection of twin hysterias holds its own dangers. The middle way in the matter of cultural freedom in American society must not, through its refusal to go along with the fears of either a Joseph McCarthy on the one hand, or a Vincent Hallinan on the other, be trapped into its own special complacency, a complacency which would probably constitute a graver danger to the future of American institutions than the threat of either the right or the left extremists.

FOR in spite of the excesses of the professional patriots, there does exist a real problem of subversion in the United States, of which the great middle of responsible, unhysterical citizens must be aware. And despite the blindness of unreconstructed "liberals," there does loom on our horizon a cloud of native fascism which, if it continues to move closer, may well become the deadly threat which many fear is already upon us.

The difficult task of preserving the nation's cultural climate thus rests with those citizens who can maintain a sense of critical sanity during a time of great trial and, rejecting the fears and false dichotomies of extremists, will attack those threats to America's freedom which extremists represent.

This may not be prove a particularly spectacular nor even a notably grateful role. It may well call down the charges of both "fellow-traveler" and "red-baiter" upon one who plays it.

The "danger to American culture" may rest not so much in the hysterias of either the extreme right or the extreme left, in themselves, (because each extreme is a minority in our land), as in a danger that the healthy center of American opinion will remain complacent, intimidated, or unaware, and thus allow to be lost through default what could never go in conscious struggle.

Informed opinion in the United States must be loud in its continuous insistence on the basically pluralistic structure of our society, and hence quick to defend those accused of "subversion" merely because of their failure to conform to majority patterns of thought or behavior. It must encourage the growth of variety and nonconformity in our cultural patterns, because these are essential to a free society. It must, in short, give the lie to both McCarthyism and a naive liberalism. To the threat of both it must reaffirm America.

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DIVIDE AND CONQUER

IN the recent past when unions were in the early stages of their struggle to become effective bargaining agents in a number of American industries, management resorted to the stratagem of playing off union against union. Sometimes there were vying contenders already in the field; in other cases new "unions" had to be created. Hence the independent or "company union" prominent on our industrial landscape in the early thirties. By now, however, the union shop and the principle that a single union negotiate for all a plant's or an industry's employees have been rather solidly established.

The new power wielded by organized labor in this country has not proved an unmixed blessing. In certain industries where the unions are strongest it is often abused. Terms of work in union-management contracts are exacted in a manner sometimes verging on dictation. Iron-clad union security has too often led to lying down on the job, "featherbedding" and the creation of useless jobs. The widespread complaint about how hard it is to obtain an honest day's work today stems in many instances from actual experience.

How adequately account for these difficulties? Is it an aggrieved feeling that now the shoe is on the other foot; the weaknesses of human nature; labor's insufficient preparation for its new responsibilities; temporary growing pains? The hope is that American labor, and likewise management, will develop a broad sense of social responsibility.

And on the far horizon is the prospect that labor and management will cease viewing each other as antagonists rooted to opposite sides of a bargaining table: some day there may be achieved a true partnership, with an appropriate sharing of responsibilities and profits all round. In the meantime a system that provides genuine collective bargaining, much more widespread purchasing power and greater worker and business security marks a great advance over the hit or miss set-up of the heyday of management-dominated laissez-faire.

If this change in climate is in varying degrees acknowledged by most American businessmen, it is still rejected by certain die-hards North and South. The present labor dispute at the General Electric Company would seem to provide a case in point; and it involves no less than 70,000 workers.

The allegiance of the great majority of these men and women is to the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers, CIO. Yet the Company has been doing what it can to build up a smaller rival union, the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers—a union that was ejected from the CIO three years ago because of its Communist leadership.

Is this a case of any port in a storm for the GE management? Despite the fact that the Atomic Energy Commission directed General Electric to give no recognition to the UE union for reasons of national security, the Company even today—in its fight against IUE—gives this Communist-dominated group preferential treatment. This appears to be an integral part of a tough stand against meeting the terms proposed by the workers for their new contract, which is now overdue.

When James B. Carey, president of IUE, resigned from several advisory government posts in protest against General Electric's two-billion-dollar defense contracts, he declared that "a major part" of these contracts are being fulfilled "in the few plants where UE is the bargaining agent."

A situation such as this, involving national security, makes one wonder how far management is on occasion willing to go in order to win out in a protracted dispute with a union.

NEXT WEEK

GEOFFREY ASHE writes about the New Fabian socialism in Britain.

"On foreign policy the outlook of the New Fabians is confusing. They are far less anti-American than some would suppose. But while approving the link with the U.S., they offer a surely incompatible scheme of scotching Communism with kindness. One can hardly exaggerate the importance of Tito in current English socialist thought. He is held up as the proof that heresy can succeed—that non-Muscovite Communism is possible. Hence, it is urged, Britain should act friendly toward the Chinese People's Republic and come to terms with colonial rebellion even where it is Communist-led. If the Marxian empire is threatened from outside, it will stick together, but otherwise it will fall apart or, at least, decline as a menace."

THE FINAL STAGES

WITH the number of speeches now required of Presidential candidates, not even the most voluble of men could produce all his own. The major speeches in key areas, countless whistle stops and radio and TV appearances make demands on the candidates that seem endless.

From the beginning General Eisenhower has made little pretence that he was writing the

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speeches he delivered. From his changes in tone as his campaign unfolded it is obvious that he has been changing his speech writers—and lately somewhat for the better. The word now is that in the waning weeks of the big battle Ike's writers are planning to set him off on a new and more convincing tack.

It is otherwise with Governor Stevenson. The speeches with which he first sought to analyze the issues of the campaign—in the vain hope of drawing his rival into serious debate—were primarily his own. They were the real Stevenson. Although he continues to go over his talks, it would appear that his most recent ones to a much larger extent than before are at least derivative.

This raises questions about the remaining speeches of the campaign. Barring the unexpected emergence of some real debate, what further light can they be expected to throw on the two candidates? Mr. Stevenson has made clear his position on leading public issues; his off-the-cuff answers on controversial questions have unmistakably revealed his knowledge and his judgment. With his opponent the voice is the General's but the words are obviously the words of someone else. And hasn't the American voter already had sufficient evidence on which to make up his mind?

AN END TO SEGREGATION

ON matters involving race, timing is admittedly an important consideration. On few subjects do passions run so high and tempers flare so quickly. Yet there has never been a step taken which was not opposed by some men of goodwill as rash or untimely.

Do you want to abolish the poll tax? There are those who say the time is not yet ripe. Do you want to end residential segregation in the cities? There are many voices ready to counsel patience and the long view. Would you like to see an end to racist practices in the schools? The doctrines of caution and moderation will be urged upon you.

If these arguments could always be dismissed out-of-hand, the matter would be simple enough. But they cannot. The struggle for interracial justice must necessarily be waged with a full awareness that the fate of individual human beings is tied up with each crucial decision. There can be no grandstand plays, no demonstrations purely for effect; the risk is too great. In the South, for example, change must come, but it cannot come overnight, and the popular practice of seeking votes in the North by urging reform upon the South does nothing but harm.

But though timing is important in any frontal assault on prejudice, the fact still remains that few instances of progress toward interracial justice were begun without a background of disapproving murmurs about waiting for a more propitious time. For every instance in which admonitions to delay are well-founded, there are scores where such advice should be disregarded. People easily tend to exaggerate the effects of any change, and very frequently the change considered so revolutionary in discussion goes off in practice without a hitch.

New Jersey in recent years faced just such a problem. In South Jersey, the schools were on a segregated basis. When it was proposed that segregation be outlawed, opponents suggested all kinds of dire results that might follow. Some Negroes even opposed the move, for fear that Negro teachers would lose their jobs if segregation were ended.

But New Jersey went ahead in the face of such opposition, and fears of increased racial friction and of loss of jobs for Negro teachers have proved equally unfounded. "Good will, common sense and fair play have been demonstrated in all the communities concerned," reports the director of the state division against discrimination, Joseph L. Bustard. By its action, New Jersey has demonstrated the difference between real prudence and a caution that fears every change, and it has given an example which could stand widespread imitation.

POSTSCRIPT ON NIXON

DEMOCRATS and Republicans alike agree that the historic television broadcast by Senator Nixon was something of an accomplishment. Some unkind persons are even suggesting that if defeated for the Vice-Presidency, Nixon has a bright future replacing Jack Armstrong as the All-American boy. Be that as it may, it seems only fair to indicate that Nixon has run into a problem that has plagued other artists from time to time; art and reality do not always seem to match.

In his broadcast, Nixon said: "I'm proud of the fact that the taxpayers, by subterfuge or otherwise, have never paid one dime for expenses which I thought were political and shouldn't be charged to the taxpayers."

Since the broadcast, however, Nixon's campaign manager has admitted that the Senator did use his franking privilege for political purposes on at least one occasion, which involved mailing some twenty-three thousand letters to Californians on a matter of Republican party interest only. The cost of such free mailings is, of course, borne by the taxpayer. Up to this writing, some weeks later, Senator Nixon has refused all comment on the matter.

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THE LEGEND AND THE CANDIDATE

A LITTLE more than a year ago (September 14, 1951) I wrote about General Eisenhower on this page. Here are a few excerpts from that piece:

"As long as the popular image of Eisenhower remains, politically he is dynamite. But in the heat of an election there would surely be an all-out attempt on the part of the opposition to change the image. . . . To the extent that Dwight Eisenhower would be identified with one group of citizens, as opposed to another, he would cease to be the universal type-figure. The Typical American should be neither Republican nor Democrat. He should not be identified too closely with one group, else how can he personalize the aspirations of all? A certain amount of vagueness is essential to the role. . . . The only point to be made now is that as a Republican (or a Democrat) General Ike will cease to be the typical American, thus becoming incapable of the role that some of his ardent supporters expect him to play."

How does it look now as the campaign draws to a close? I think the former popular image of Ike has changed radically, for both Democrats and Republicans. Before the campaign even began, during the Republican convention, the towering symbolism began to shrivel. Then it was Ike *versus* Taft, and Dwight Eisenhower began to learn the heavy burden of open partisanship. Ike, whose genius was in uniting dissident parties—as the third man between two opposing forces—found himself the object of a bitter struggle. When Ike was called from Europe to run as President, the big argument his supporters put forth was that he would restore unity to a very badly divided nation.

Ike's first political role was that of a controversial figure. At the convention people were pro- or anti-Ike. The former won and the latter went back to their homes, bitterly loyal to Robert A. Taft. In the months since, much of the General's efforts have been given to healing the wounds and divisions created by his own candidacy. He has worked hard at it, many people would say too hard. For Republicans and Democrats alike, the shining Eisenhower image is not what it was when our "We Like Ike" piece was written.

The old Ike would never put himself in the position of even seeming to be disloyal or ungrateful to Marshall. He would certainly not be the kind to go around the country thundering invectives and feeding on hatreds and disunities. The old image of Ike was of "a genial fellow, mature and yet indestructably boyish; a supremely confident leader with no note of arrogance; a tough-minded man of action in no way domineering; a knowing chap who has been around, yet not a sophisticate; a great man who wears his greatness lightly." Since the campaign has begun, the boyishness has almost disappeared and, in the unfamiliar world of partisan politics, Eisenhower's maturity is strangely ineffectual. He seems so often to be a man who takes rather than gives orders, an oddly incongruous figure among the knowing politicos, rather like an over-age rookie trying to hold his own with seasoned old sergeants.

There used to be no doubt about Ike's confidence. Now in partisan politics it is too loud, too assertive to be convincing. There is about it the hollow ring of his campaign speeches. It is almost impossible to have the old feeling about the unfailing confidence when it is known that he feels he has to compromise (with McCarthy and Taft, for instance) to make "agreements" and "reservations"—because they are part of the game, and if he does not play along he may lose.

Perhaps Eisenhower was asked to perform an impossible task: to be a hero and a kind of saint in a business which is not run along heroic, saintly lines. Perhaps it is impossible to fling a legend into the messiness of a campaign and still preserve the legend's purity. Certainly since the campaign began the Eisenhower history has been the struggle between the Candidate and the Legend. The Legend, I fear, is just about gone now, and only the Candidate remains. It is a little sad. We may get a President, but we shall have lost a hero.

It seems to me that there are two kinds of Eisenhower supporters around today—those who want a victor for their party, above all else, and who know that the only way to get it is for Ike to carry enough states on November 4th. These people don't believe in legends anyway, so they are satisfied with the "new Ike," the "pour it on" candidate who can give veteran Truman a run for his money.

The other kind of Ike supporters are frankly unhappy about the turn the campaign has taken. It seems long, long ago to them since a hero came back from Europe and was turned into a candidate. But these people do not believe the hero is gone forever. They call for faith. The campaign has necessarily meant compromises and expediency—but let us not lose faith. All will be well when Ike gets in the White House. The Hero will be back on the scene and the Candidate will be gone forever—and gone with him will be all the unpleasant capitulations and necessary political deals. Hold fast to the faith, brethren, and all will be well. The present is a dark, dark night of the soul. All will be well.

JOHN COGLEY.

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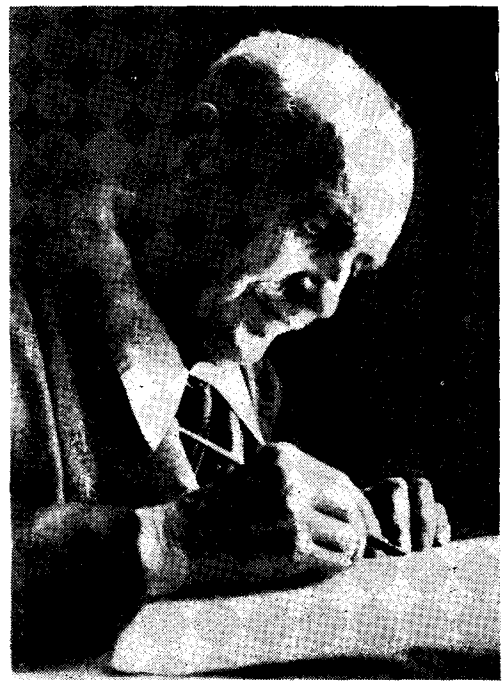
Memories of Santayana

"NOW," SAYS THE AUTHOR, A PRIEST AND A PHILOSOPHER, "NOW IS THE TIME TO REMINISCE, TO REMEMBER A FRIEND."

RICHARD BUTLER

THIS is how it was:

Sister Angela worked with quiet efficiency preparing her tea trays in the little kitchen on the first floor corridor. One less tray, she remembered again. The "poor old man," as she customarily referred to her special patient, had always enjoyed his tea and biscuits. But not now, not any more. A dying man in the last stages of stomach cancer doesn't even think about food. He should be thinking about his soul. Sister Angela prayerfully hoped that he was.



Her own thought remained and disturbed her. Deciding to look in on him once more, she put down the tray she was carrying and left her kitchen. At the other end of the corridor she pushed open the heavy door of the converted visitors' parlor and stepped into the narrow high-studded room.

She walked softly around the folding screen in the corner and looked at the shriveled figure on the bed. His eyes were closed, sunken into their sockets, the thin skin-folds of his deflated jowls immobile. After nearly fifty years of nursing, Sister Angela hardly needed to touch the limp emaciated wrist.

The "poor old man" was dead.

Five thousand miles away, I sat at my desk picking through a stack of unanswered letters. I selected a large rust-colored envelope, received a few weeks before, and began to re-read the scrawled words that had been pieced together in so strange a fashion.

The message was written on thin strips of white paper which were pasted, like the words of a telegram, onto a large lined sheet of notebook paper. The opening words—"I am getting weaker and my eyes have failed me"—offered an explanation. Only by guiding a pen along such paper-strips could a weakened and blinded writer keep his words on an even line. My correspondent was a fastidious man.

Time was running out for this man who to me was a personal friend, a philosophical foe, and, of primary concern, a soul estranged from God. For I am a priest before I am a philosopher, even before I am a man with natural affiliations and affections. Turning to my typewriter, I realized that this was probably the last opportunity to —. I was interrupted by a knock at the door. Had I heard? A news announcement, just now.

Time and opportunity had run out. George Santayana was dead.

Now that he is dead, much will be said and written about Santayana. He will be called a brilliant American man of letters, a rebellious fallen-away Catholic, a great and profound philosopher. George Santayana was none of these.

That he was a gifted writer, an unusually talented craftsman of English composition, is, of course, undeniable. But he was not an American, either by birth nor by adoption. He was a Spaniard by birth, a cosmopolitan wanderer by preference.

He came to this country when he was nine years old, the result of a strange and sudden decision of his brooding mother to fulfill a promise made to her first husband (a Sturgis of Boston whom she had met in the Philippines) to raise his children in America. Jorge the only child of her second marriage to Don Augustin Ruiz de Santayana of Avila, remained alone with his father for three years after his mother's departure with the three Sturgis children. Then the impassive Don Augustin brought the boy to Boston, left him with his mother, and never saw his wife again.

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George, the Bostonian, lived on the wrong side of Beacon Street in a small cluttered house where, he said, "the family was deeply disunited and each member unhappy for a different reason." As a youth he preferred solitude, feeling his foreign ways in the company of possible companions. He read avidly, feeding his insatiable imagination, and made a brilliant scholastic showing at Boston Latin School and Harvard University.

After his first return to Europe, to visit his father and to use a scholarship for a year of graduate studies in Berlin, he became increasingly discontented with American life and manners. Although he taught at Harvard for twenty-three years, along with William James, and succeeded Josiah Royce to the University's chair of philosophy, Santayana despised his academic profession and surroundings (including President Eliot and most of the faculty) and spent his free time abroad. After his thirty-eighth transatlantic crossing, he received news of his mother's death. He never went home again.

Well-financed by his prodigious writings, he remained a self-exile in Europe, making his home in hotels in London, Paris and Rome till the onset of World War II. Then in advanced age and ill health, he sought and secured a final home with the Little Company of Mary at their hospital on Monte Celio in the Eternal City. And there he died in his 89th year.

George Santayana was even less a Catholic than he was an American. Although born a Spaniard, he lived more than half of his life in America. Although born into the Catholic faith by baptism, he never chose to live in that faith. Strictly speaking he did not fall away, because in his responsible years he at no time professed or practiced, or even understood, Catholicism; he could not even recognize any real foundation for supernatural faith.

He was not, as *Newsweek* said, "raised a strict Catholic." He was not raised a Catholic at all.

Expressly, his father was an atheist, his mother a deist. Force of custom and tradition, fear of social ostracism in Catholic Spain, urged his parents to bring him as an infant to the baptismal font of San Marco's Church in Madrid. But he, by responsible choice, never requested or received any other sacrament.

His father, to whom he was strongly attached, taught him the crass materialism of Lucretius, particularly the Epicurean's thesis that religion is a sham, born of fear and wonder and foisted upon the ignorant by crafty peddlers of superstition. His mother, who dutifully followed her Sturgis benefactors to King's Chapel in Boston, was enraged when she heard that her children occasionally sneaked off to attend an early Mass before going to Unitarian services.

That young George did get to Mass at all was due partly to his half-sister Susana's pleading and partly to his own preference. Susana, in spite of her mother, became and remained to her death a devoted Catholic. George, with his keen mind and cultivated imagination, was naturally drawn to the colorful pageantry of Catholic ritual.

"Catholic preachers," he once noted, "at least are expected to preach the Gospel, and not some message new to the age." But Santayana never scratched through the surface of Catholicism; only to its pictorial, superficial appeal was he drawn as an appreciative but detached spectator. His attraction to Catholicism, as he once described it himself, was simply a matter of *aficion*: sentimental sympathy.

He cannot be called rebellious, because he never acknowledged a true faith that he could rebel against. Some men of artistic genius, facing the inevitable alternatives forced upon a clear and unprejudiced soul, have been called "wrestlers with Christ." Santayana, enslaved by a domineering imagination, and radically prejudiced in his philosophy, never even got into the fray. In his earlier period of sheer romanticism he stopped to look in at the door, but he never cared, or dared, to enter the arena.

I HAVE said that Santayana was neither great nor profound as a philosopher. This is not the embittered criticism of a philosophical foe, but a sound judgment shared by most reliable observers on all sides. His greatness lies in other directions.

He does not even deserve the title of philosopher, if by common agreement the etymological meaning of the word is accepted. Santayana was not a lover of wisdom. He was an essentialist *par excellence,* and, as M. Gilson, has noted, "The awareness of existence is the beginning of philosophical wisdom." Santayana never got started in philosophy. He was utterly, and preferably, detached from existential reality, and from truth which is but a mental embrace of it. His basic difficulty was that he could not distinguish between reason and imagination, thought and fancy, poetry and philosophy.

This fundamental flaw was apparent in his earliest publications. In his *Interpretations of Religion and Poetry* (1900), he concluded that "religion was poetry intervening in life." The repudiation of religion and exaltation of poetry as a way of life is his basic and dominant theme, and all his other works were constructed in its defense. Towards the end of his life I pointed out this fact to him, and in his last letter to me he at least admitted: "It is true that, as to religion, this book (*Interpretations*) had struck the keynote."

Santayana claimed to be a skeptic; actually he was a decided dogmatist. He presupposed the patently erroneous method of transcendental criticism, which,

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by a mental gymnastic, cuts thought from its essential object, a trick which had deviated and doomed the whole course of modern philosophy. Materialism was his second "self-evident" postulate. According to him, "naturalism, or materialism" constitutes "a presupposition of conventional sanity." In other words, if you don't accept originative materialism as a presupposition you are crazy.

He claimed to be a realist; he was, in fact, a trapped idealist who tried to escape absolute idealism by bridging the cognitional divide with what he called "animal faith." Therefore, "all knowledge is faith," he concluded, and truth is no man's prerogative, only a norm of convenience in the practical conduct of life. The way was clear for Santayana to declare as fact whatever pleased his fancy.

Santayana's radical, and personally tragic, error of confusing poetry with philosophy pervaded everything that he wrote; and all that he has said can be summed up in the conclusion that from the womb to the tomb we live a dream life, all thought and fancy being purely subjective inspirations.

In the final volume of his memoirs, which will be published soon by Scribners, Santayana advises his reader to "cultivate imagination, give it endless forms, but do not let it deceive you." This was, precisely, his own tragic mistake: that he did cultivate his gifted imagination to the fatal extreme of dislodging reason's natural primacy, and let his endless forms, or "essences," as he called them, deceive him into a conviction that "only the ideal was real" and all of reality just "ashes in the mouth."

I should like to return to an appreciation of his true greatness as a literary artist. Perhaps later. But now is the time to reminisce, to remember a friend.

MY association with George Santayana began in Rome nearly two years ago.

At the suggestion of my dean of graduate studies, I decided to do a critical study of Santayana's philosophy as a dissertation requirement for my doctor's degree. The opportunity was rare and promising: my selected subject was living; better still, he was living only a mile away from me. Perhaps he would provide the privileged benefit of personal consultation.

Up to that time my acquaintance with George Santayana was limited to a reading of *The Last Puritan* during college days. By the time I had finished my dissertation I had read nearly every published word that Santayana had written; more importantly, and pertinently, we had become good friends.

I remember the first of many walks up to Monte Celio: along the Via dei Fori Imperiali, where the skeletal forums of the Caesars still stand; around the Coloseum, a gigantic, grim shell of an arena sodden with the blood of beasts and gladiators and martyrs; up the Via Claudia, bordered by the jutting substructures of Agrippina's temple of Claudius; then onto the Via San Stefano Rotondo, named for the curious circular church built on the corner in the fifth century; adjacent to the church runs a jagged stretch of the original city wall, broken by the sudden entrance into the paved driveway of the trim modern hospital of the Little Company of Mary.

I gave the blue-veiled Sister at the door a prepared typewritten card announcing my name and purpose and asked her to deliver it to "the professor," as I knew he was called there. She quickly disappeared and as quickly reappeared, asking me if I would wait a few minutes. He hadn't finished his tea. Tea alone, I learned, was a kind of ritual to him and the only social restriction he insisted upon.

Later I was escorted down the first floor corridor past a series of visitors' parlors to the one on the end, and there I was left tapping timidly on the thick oaken door. Something more was learned; he was hard of hearing. At last after getting a response, and painful knuckles, I entered the converted parlor: with its bookcases, a cluttered desk, a moveable screen discreetly hiding a bed and wash-stand.

In a chair by the window I found him: dressed in a faded and stained gray bathrobe, a blanket drawn over his knees, a book in one hand and a magnifying glass in the other; he was at that time still rather paunchy, with puffed uneven jowls, sparse hair, a frayed moustache, and, his most striking feature: large dark Spanish eyes, which I soon discovered could alternately dart in delight, glare in disagreement, smile in amusement, or flatly stare in sudden reflection.

In a voice strained deep in his throat, enthusiastic but deliberate, he graciously expressed his greeting. He excused himself for not rising and extended his hand. The two end fingers were curved inwardly, probably from arthritis, so that one had the impression of shaking a partly closed fist which concealed something.

He apologized for keeping me waiting, but "tea," he explained, "is a kind of medicine to me." Merry chuckles punctuated his sentences. He added another apology for receiving me in this single room, a bedroom. I reminded him that it was a visitors' parlor, hence quite proper.

He laughed appreciatively, made some critical reference to the poems of Robert Lowell that he was reading, and within minutes we were discussing and disputing Aristotle's doctrine on the nature of the psyche. We talked through dusk, without turning on the lights which hurt his eyes, until I could hardly see him in front of me. I left at a late hour. He invited me to return. I did, every other week for nearly two years.

(Father Butler's memoirs of Santayana will be concluded next week.)

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Letters from Rome

IN THE LATER YEARS OF HIS LIFE, SANTAYANA'S CORRESPONDENCE MIRRORED HIS CONTINUING INTEREST IN LITERATURE, RELIGION, AND IDEAS

(The following are excerpts from letters written by George Santayana, from Rome, to Mr. Cyril Clemens, founder of the International Mark Twain Society, whose home is in Missouri. Mr. Santayana and Mr. Clemens corresponded over a period of years. Mr. Clemens was good enough to turn over a batch of letters to this magazine, from which the Editors have excerpted paragraphs they thought might be of special interest to our readers.)

I AM afraid that I have nothing to say about either Chesterton or E. A. Robinson. The one was too crisp for me, the other too dull, and both left me empty. So does almost all contemporary poetry.

As to *The Last Puritan,* only the northern nations seem to have taken him seriously. There have been German, Swedish, and Danish translations. Nothing else so far except projects. The book is taken as a document in sociology, not as a work of art, which perhaps it is not. I hardly know. *December, 1937.*

Your card of April 6, forwarded by Scribner through the ordinary mail, reminds me that I have not thanked you for one or two others previously received, or for the unexpected present of the check, which was reduced only to a good intention on your part by the impossibility of cashing it in the present circumstances. So far, save for delay on some occasions, I have been able to get money from my nephew in Boston, who manages my earthly goods; but this may become impossible at any moment, so that I live with one foot in the stirrup, and may have to take refuge in Switzerland. However, if I can obtain a permit of residence there for the rest of the war, the change would have its advantages; but I fear the cold in winter. This last season has not been good for my health: however, it has become normal; and as my principal work is done, it really matters little what becomes of me.

I spend the mornings writing a voluminous book to be called *Persons, Places or Fragments of Autobiography* in which I put everything that occurs to me, and which may stretch to any length, according to that of my life.

I write to only one or two relations and very old friends, and that chiefly on business . . . However it is pleasant to be remembered and—I hope—prayed for. *May 1941.*

You are very good to remember me, and the scarcity of "chicken-feed" in Rome at this moment. Unfortunately, cheques cannot be cashed, nor would money be always able to procure what we want, but I understand that now it is possible to send us parcels, not containing perishable victuals, once a month. If this is the case, it would be most friendly of you, instead of cheques, which I might as well tear up, to send me a little *tea!* I am asking everybody for tea or for marmalade—the luxuries being always more welcome to a man of taste than the necessaries; and I am not afraid of getting too much tea or too much marmalade, because the good sisters here, who are all English-speaking, would always appreciate such things for themselves or for their patients. Let me thank you in anticipation for your gift, so transubstantiated.

A great many army men have come to see me, as the oldest living inhabitant, and some of them have interviewed and photographed me or given me various presents of books and eatables. I am very well, still at work, and better for being thinner, on account of the diet to which we are reduced. But at my age such restrictions are not unpleasant, and I tell the sisters that I was never happier in my life than I am here, and hope to remain with them for the rest of my life. This is a beautiful place; I have a view with a sea-like horizon of greenery, and when cabs and taxis return the only objection to this place—its remoteness from the center of the town—will be removed. *December, 1944.*

I have lately come upon things of Chesterton's, for instance his little book about St. Thomas Aquinas, that raised my estimation of him as a critic: as a wit, I find him tiresome, as is too much punning.

My next book—which is a religious one, or at least about religion—will come out probably early in 1946: it is now in the press; but it is not the third volume of *Persons and Places,* which I don't intend to publish in my lifetime.

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You ask if I have had many visits lately from Americans. I have had a surprising stream of them for a year or more, with free "rides" in "jeeps" and presents of chocolate, tea, soap, marmalade and other rarities, including copies of my own books, that I had never seen. The young men seem wiser than in my time: perhaps it is the war. *August, 1945.*

Your letter, and your present of most welcome little luxuries have arrived safely; but I am afraid books, as being only ghostly goods, cannot yet reach us. We ought to send these to you in exchange, but I am afraid, we are reduced to importing them also. However, a very lively young man named Viereck left me yesterday a copy of a small Italian review called *Mercurio* in which there are some good articles, and evidence of "liveliness" in the intellectual sector. *April, 1945.*

The disgust with "literature" and "aesthetics" is common now and I welcome it as a return to realism. They will tell you that I am "literary" and "aesthetic"; but only in form, because I belong to the 1890's; in substance I laugh at all that as much as any saint or any Philistine.

No; I have not seen your *Franklin D. Roosevelt,* and don't send it to me. He is too near in time and too far off in philosophy. *May, 1947.*

Now I am going to ask *you* a question that really interests me, and that I should think must interest you more than Presidential candidates, Jonathan Swift, Thomas Hardy or Robert Frost. What can you tell me of Robert Lowell? He has sent me his little book of poems (in modern cryptic style, but in verse!) from "Istanbul" where he is at the American Embassy; he is evidently a Catholic and not a satisfied follower of Thomas Jefferson or an enthusiastic Bostonian. I thought everybody in America now was alike, and beyond being more standardized by Communism. But here is an exception; because he is very American and very poetical, although I can't say that I understand all his verses. But his *existence* is very important in my eyes; much more important for the spiritual diagnosis of the day than five American Cardinals. *August, 1947.*

The *tone* of your conversational article about Maurice Baring, with its side-lights on Chesterton and Belloc confirms a feeling that Robert Hugh Benson's Catholic novels had given me, that modern converts in every country have to be like birds escaped from cages; Catholics to the manor born may be apostolic like you or sceptics like me, but we feel at home in any case and don't ride hobbies. *December, 1947.*

You must remember that I am old, in my 85th year, and concentrating my time and energies, such as I have, to getting a last book ready, even if not complete, for my literary executor to publish after my death. I can't work for more than 2 or 3 hours a day, and the rest of the time, when there are no visitors, I give to reading books that either I know to be rewarding, or hope may prove so. But they must be, directly or indirectly, useful for my work and stimulating to my mind. The newspapers tell me enough of current events and celebrities. I have read the six volumes of Toynbee's *A Study of History.* I am reading the third volume of Osbert Sitwell's *Autobiography,* and I have been attracted, as you know, by Robert Lowell's poetry. But I have had many disappointments with books I have ordered and then found more commonplace or deceptive than the reviews in *The Times Literary Supplement* had led me to expect. For instance, I find little or nothing to my purpose in Boothby's *Fight to Live* or in Laswell's *Analysis of Political Behaviour*—a promising title. The French "Existentialists" also are hardly worth reading. We seem to be crossing foggy swamps of intellectual and political importance.

You will think this simply an old man's incapacity to keep up with the times. I am indeed not trying to keep up with them, but to look to the end and to the whole. *June, 1948.*

As to writing a "Foreword" to a book by or about Mark Twain, you must remember that my membership in the Mark Twain Society was entirely your doing when you and your mother were here in Rome about 25 years ago. I have never read a word of Mark Twain's books, but remember *The Jumping Frog* that my half-brother, Robert Sturgis, had learned by heart at the English High School in Boston, about the year 1870. In the *Times Literary Supplement* (which is my chief means of information about contemporary literature), I read the other day the clearest brief comment on his "message" (if we may call it so) which I had ever come across. His two principal personages represent slightly different phases of the American independent mind, question the value and truth of every conventional opinion, with a sort of manly or boyish good-humored defiance and (as far as I can see, though the *Times Supplement* didn't say this) no positive result of his own. You see, then, how impossible it is for me to write anything about him for publication.

I have now finished, and am reading the proofs of my *last* book, *Dominations and Powers,* which we hope may appear in the coming spring in New York. It is my funeral oration, after which it would not be expected that I should say anything.

I don't think "ideologies" particularly worth studying, but it is instructive to contrast the pictures they paint of the ideal with the facts. Humanitarians have an intense hatred of mankind as it is. Jefferson says somewhere in this little book—I wish I could quote the

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passage verbatim but I can't find it—that he would like to exterminate all non-democrats from every country, and fill them all with Americans after his own heart. This is the principle on which Stalin acts.

You would be impressed with the pilgrimages that are crowding Rome this year, and with the endurance shown by the Pope in undergoing all these feasts and functions. But the Church was certainly never more alive than now. Not being taken for granted has a stimulating effect on ideas. *May, 1950.*

Many thanks for your letter May 14th, with the good-humored review (of *Dominations and Powers*) in *Time* Magazine, which is the best I have seen so far, much better than those by the Professors Hook and Krutch in the New York *Times* and *Herald-Tribune.* My new book is too complicated for a hasty reader to take in at once, and people are accustomed to be guided in public affairs by their feelings, without considering origins or tendencies in the actual events. I am content, for the moment, to be regarded as a mere curiosity.

Tom Sawyer arrived in due time and has been religiously read from cover to cover. It is hardly as suggestive of Don Quixote as the latter part of *Huckleberry Finn,* but I will consider both books together and in that respect only in my paper, which is partly written but not quite finished even in the written part. You are not in a hurry and I am very slow now at everything. I have not had the "flu," but only a recurrence of my catarrh, and general fatigue, so that I have given up receiving visitors, except old friends. Please don't send me cheques. We are not in business. I will send *Tom Sawyer* back at once. *May, 1951.*

Today I have sent back your copy of my *Middle Span,* with an inscription, but not with any compliments to Mark Twain, because having finished reading *Huckleberry Finn,* I have an idea of a greater adventure, which is to compose an essay, which you may print in your magazine if you like, on the relation of Tom Sawyer to Don Quixote. But for this I must first read the preceding book on Tom Sawyer especially. Robert Lowell, who has been here again during the past week, tells me that it is not so good a book as *Huckleberry Finn;* but I am not interested in giving marks to works of art or to their authors as if they were being examined for recommendation to office. What I want is to understand whether the love of adventure in Tom Sawyer is a romantic passion, with a corresponding idealistic faith (as in Don Quixote, who was mad) or only a love of mischief, of risk, of swagger as in every schoolboy. My superficial impression so far, is that Mark Twain is a thorough sceptic, and not a real prophet of personal independence, vs. social convention of every sort. *Feb., 1952.*

THE STAGE

AN EVENING WITH BEATRICE LILLIE

THERE is no accounting for Miss Beatrice Lillie when the afflatus is upon her, and currently—at the Booth—it is. As an insolent housemaid clog-dancing in the parlor, as a deranged *femme du monde* descending backstage on an exhausted actress, or a nasal adolescent blankly contemplating the facts of life ("Does mother know?"), she is exercising richly her lunatic charm, and has never been quite so intolerably tolerable. The good news too is that her entourage includes Mr. Reginald Gardiner, a supreme comic in his own modest vein, blandly interpreting for us the world of inanimate objects—arrogant battleships, indifferent lighthouses, and hostile locomotives ("they *loathe* humanity").

Yet Miss Lillie's world, on the surface so full of wit and light and air, is, I submit, a dark and sinister place. Lillie Land we might call it, a strange frontier territory in which the laws of human probability do not obtain —where at any moment, without warning, your goldfish is apt to yodel, and there are fairies in the bottom of *everybody's* garden. Here wanders Miss Lillie, alone and palely loitering. She does not really *belong*—she was only out buying those dozen double damask dinner napkins when a malignant twist of fate isolated her permanently in this no-man's-land. Destiny, she darkly hints, is behind all her catastrophes; it may *look* like gastritis ("Wind Round My Heart, We Should Never Have Dined A La Carte") but we know and she knows that a pity beyond all telling is hid in the heart of indigestion.

It is also a treacherous world: you mustn't except anything, particularly of time, that old gypsy man, or life, a cruel deceiver. Someone is always waiting to pull the rug out from under you. Hence the look of fishy prescience with which Miss Lillie regards human endeavor. "He was a gentleman," she tells us sweetly: there is a pause: instantly our worst suspicions are confirmed. And given nature red in tooth and claw, can one blame her for succumbing to bleak Spenglerian moods of self-knowledge and foreboding? Somewhere between the dark and the daylight, after that third brandy, she faces The Truth: "I saw myself, a vulgar, horrid fraud." But does she selfishly hold on to this morsel of wisdom? Not our little lost lady! Fortified with another drink, impaling a friend with gimlet eye, she announces confidentially: "Maude, You're Rotten to the Core." Life, you see, is real here, and earnest: at three o'clock in the morning it is always the dark night of the soul. "Does the road wind uphill *all* the way?" Miss Lillie cries, her voice quivering with pathos and all the old-school virtues they teach you in the fifth form at St. Monica's. "Well, *apparently!*" comes the dreadful answer.

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Mr. T. S. Eliot could, I suppose, do another "Marie Lloyd" on Miss Lillie, yet I should hate to see the blight of analysis chill this volatile genius. "The play is over, the thrill is gone," she tells us, concluding our evening in her company. To which we cry out instinctively, heart and mind—no! no!—sure that somewhere behind that cool and mocking eye, madness still compounds with humor in this too somber time. It is a pleasure to report that comedy has set his temple in our town, and that the divinity is quite definitely at home. (*At the Booth*)

RICHARD HAYES.

COMMUNICATIONS

"A MATTER OF ESCAPE"

New York, N. Y.

TO The Editors: Nowadays I seldom see The Commonweal, and it was some days after the September 19th number appeared before a friend called my attention to the fact that John Cogley had accused me of applying a "double standard" in judging between Senator McCarthy and *Time* magazine. Mr. Cogley agrees that it was indeed a "low blow" on the part of *Time* to say that the Senator, though he "generally goes to Mass" sometimes "cannot resist the temptation of a steak on Friday." That snide remark was only one of many in the same article in *Time*.

But Mr. Cogley thinks it odd that although I find *Time's* method of controversy "nauseating" I can stomach Senator McCarthy's. What I said in the column referred to, and in others, was that I had heard the Senator in conversation and on the lecture platform and that I had read scores of thousands of words that he has written, but that in all my acquaintance with his words and his manner I had not detected the vicious thing which his enemies call "McCarthyism."

Mr. Cogley selects what he considers an "ominous" sentence of the Senator, to the effect that he is checking up on Mr. Stevenson's record since the day he "entered Government service at about the same time and in the same department as the Hiss, Abt, Witt and Pressman group." Your editorial confrere is surprised that I do not consider that statement "nauseating." I confess that I do not. I think it the right and the duty of any American concerned about Communism in high places to check upon the attitude of a candidate for office. Alger Hiss, traitor as well as perjurer, was a fellow worker with Adlai Stevenson. Hiss commended Stevenson and Stevenson commended Hiss. As far as the record shows Stevenson has not retracted his commendation. He merely explains that he gave it as any lawyer might when asked to testify to the character of one he had known.

Human Events for September 10th, says: "Within the

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past month, it has been shown that when Stevenson was an Assistant to the Secretary of the Navy in 1942, he conveyed orders from President Roosevelt to Navy officers on the subject of subversives. The orders were to treat Communists and fellow-travelers tolerantly. Now comes word—as yet unpublicized—that Stevenson was not merely a channel for Roosevelt's decision, not merely a subordinate who took and passed on to subordinates superior orders, but an active participant in this policy of toleration."

So it would seem not only that the New Deal candidate for the Presidency had not the perspicacity to detect what manner of man was Hiss while they worked together for a year or more, but that as late as 1942 Mr. Stevenson had not awakened to the danger of Communists and fellow travelers in the Navy.

To quote *Human Events* again: "Early in the spring of 1942, a board of Naval officers, of which Rear Admiral Staton was head, asked that Communists and fellow-travellers among marine radio operators be fired; and the board presented a list of those whose dismissal was regarded as necessary. Stevenson invited Staton to the former's office to discuss the matter. At this meeting, Staton brought up a half-dozen of these cases. After some argument, Stevenson wound up the meeting by saying that, despite the Admiral's recommendation, he saw no reason why the men should be fired."

So, I find it not reprehensible that Senator McCarthy should probe into Mr. Stevenson's record in regard to subversives in the Government and in the armed services.

(Rev.) James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

My dictionary defines an innuendo as: "an equivocal allusion so framed as to point to something injurious to the character and reputation of the person referred to." Apparently Father Gillis does not believe the term applies to Senator McCarthy's statement: "[Perhaps Governor Stevenson] could be disturbed because I am checking your record since the day you entered Government service at about the same time and in the same department as the Hiss, Abt and Pressman group." If the undocumented coupling of Mr. Stevenson's name with that of known Communists and traitors does not constitute an injurious allusion to the Governor's character and reputation, then, it seems to me, Senator McCarthy's statement is without any meaning—and so are all the other words in the dictionary.

I would not dispute Mr. McCarthy's, or anyone else's, right to check upon the attitude and record of a candidate for high office; I do deny his right to suggest publicly that the candidate is shivering in his boots because the investigation will prove what the candidate has tried to keep secret. Father Gillis, on

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one memorable occasion, was not so tolerant with such innuendo-mongering. I remember when he baldly told the followers of Paul Blanshard to quit hinting around about Catholic disloyalty and to "put up or shut up." It is advice I think he could repeat again, this time for the benefit of the junior Senator from Wisconsin.

If Senator McCarthy has some startling expose to make about the Governor, let him make it—and let him make it in time for the public to hear Governor Stevenson's side of the story before the November election. Senator McCarthy recently stated that he had completed his Stevenson investigation and hinted broadly that he has uncovered dynamite. Are we to hear nothing more about this until it is too late for Stevenson to answer effectively before November 4th? That might be good politics; I don't think it ranks very high as political morality.

On the other questions Father Gillis has brought up —the matter of the Hiss deposition and Governor Stevenson's wartime record—I will let Mr. Clayton Fritchey, Executive Assistant to the Governor, take over. In an effort to hear Mr. Stevenson's side of the story, Mr. Fritchey was shown a copy of Father Gillis' letter. *J. C.*

FIRST, Father Gillis states that Governor Stevenson "has not retracted his commendation" of Alger Hiss. In making this statement, Father Gillis implies that the Governor's deposition in the Hiss case was a "commendation" of Hiss. I enclose herewith a complete copy of the Governor's deposition which makes it perfectly clear that the Governor testified only to Hiss' reputation among *other* persons who knew him. This hardly amounts to a personal "commendation" of Hiss.

Further, Governor Stevenson has said:

> "It seems to me that it will be a very sad day for Anglo-Saxon justice when any man, and especially a lawyer, will refuse to give honest evidence in a criminal trial for fear the defendant in an action may eventually be found guilty. What would happen to our whole system of law if such timidity prevailed? If I were asked to answer the same questions tomorrow, in all honesty I would have to give exactly the same answers, *and also I would have just as little cause to quarrel with the final verdict of the court.*" (Emphasis supplied)

In a television appearance on "Meet The Press" on March 30, Governor Stevenson was asked the following question:

> "I have just one question that bears on that immediate point. That is, now that so many of the facts have come out in the Hiss case, what is your judgment or feeling about the verdict of the court?"

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The Governor's answer was as follows:

> "I am a lawyer. I believe explicity that a jury of one's peers must find the right answer or else we can have no faith in our judicial system."

No one, to my knowledge, has questioned, or would question the loyalty of John Foster Dulles, who is credited with the selection of Alger Hiss as President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. It seems equally far fetched that such a question should be raised, even by implication, with respect to Governor Stevenson, who never passed personal judgment on Hiss, as Mr. Dulles apparently did. One could, with equal justice, censure the Board of Trustees of the Endowment, one of whose members was General Dwight Eisenhower, which on December 13, 1948 demonstrated its confidence in Mr. Hiss' character by declining to accept his resignation as President of the Endowment.

Neither Father Gillis nor *Human Events* reports the source of the new "word" that Governor Stevenson was "an active participant in this policy of toleration," which he refers to.

I would like to know whence such "word" comes. Certainly, as an assistant to the Secretary of the Navy, Governor Stevenson carried out orders of his superiors. The Governor's recollection is that he did not participate in making the decision referred to here, but rather that the decision was reached at the highest level of our government. The Governor's recollection is fully consistent with the full report of the incident contained in *Human Events*. Father Gillis neglected to quote the next paragraph in the article which states:

> Some time later, Secretary Knox called the Navy board to his office and told them it was on Presidential orders that the firing of Communist and fellow-traveler radio operators should be stopped. The Admirals had to bow to this decision.

CLAYTON FRITCHEY.

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The Netherworld of Henry Miller

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Born in Brooklyn in 1894 of German-American parentage, Miller was haphazardly educated in the formal sense and led an equally knockabout and uncertain existance in Brooklyn, Manhattan and points west (as far as Los Angeles) until he was in his middle thirties and went to Paris. All during these formative years his intense curiosity and independence led him to investigate byways of experience that more conventional writers and men had left untouched; but although he had always wanted to be an author he had been unable to find "the way in" to his own particular brand of experience until he went to Paris. It was there, in the midst of international bohemia, a world-wide depression and habitual despair, that he was able to produce his first and most important works: *Tropic of Cancer, Tropic of Capricorn,* and *Black Spring.*

As one might expect—with the beautiful accuracy of hindsight judgment—these were all autobiographical novels. They were filled with Miller's sexual experiences and with retrospective accounts of his earlier life as an intellectual hobo in New York, and, later, Paris. But what made them fresh and distinctive—as well as unacceptable to the customs authorities of this country—was their naked, unliterary, often profane and entirely American attitude toward the facts of life.

It was the sexual descriptions in these early and most infamous books that gave Miller his underground reputation and, ironically, prevented the majority of his own countrymen from ever seeing a line of them; they had to be smuggled into America from Paris, or printed in bootleg editions in South America. Their perpetually poor author never recieved a cent.

Since the outbreak of the war Miller has lived in this

Mr. Krim is a free-lance critic and short-story writer whose work has appeared in the Partisan Review and "New Directions 10."

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country, settling on a mountain-top in the Big Sur country of California, and has continued his stream of books; but these more recent works, published by New Directions and available to anyone interested, have not been "fictional" even in Miller's restricted autobiographical sense, nor have they had the explosive effect of his earlier work. In the main they have been criticisms of American life and institutions from a highly individualistic point of view—one might call them anarchistic, except that word has bomb-throwing connotations, and Miller is a moral rather than a political "revolutionary".

MILLER'S latest book is a continuation of that self-examination—that joyous preoccupation with self—which has run through each one of his works, but it displays a new note as well. That is: death, the spectre that haunts every writer's works either openly or covertly. Here, quite in keeping with Miller's romantically frank personality, death has been flushed into the open and one receives the impression that the author is hurrying to fill in the gaps in his life before he leaves us. He tells us that he has often wished, as have many other readers and writers, that he knew exactly what books helped shape such creators as Dostoievsky, Balzac or Shakespeare; and therefore—and here an element of harmless Milleresque vanity shows itself—he will leave such a detailed record to those who in later years might be concerned with his influences.

This combination of egotism and genuine seriousness, reminiscent of Walt Whitman—to Miller, *the* American writer—might easily offend some readers. But one soon learns that self-indulgence is part of Miller's virtue; if he has anything valuable to offer at all it is partially a result of that fountain of Self which spouts throughout all of his works. In the present book what is valuable is the almost-inspired, because fiercely felt, writing on such little-known authors as Blaise Cendrars, Jean Giono, the Indian mystic Krishnamurti, H. Rider Haggard (the adventure-story writer), and others of comparable obscurity

When truly "lost" in his subject to the extent that he forgets about himself, Miller is, like all of us, himself in the best sense. It is not his ego which then parades across the page but his accumulated insights and total way of being which, like the best kind of dancer, expresses itself fluidly and improvises with the grace and aptness that is the result of an instinctive awareness. When this occurs, Miller does more to arouse a genuine feeling for literature, for both the reading of it and the making of it, than more astute or cautious men who have written on the same subject. Not only does this apply to his comments on the comparatively odd authors mentioned above, but also, to large extent, when he is

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"For the same reason they should share the liberal's aversion to censorship, suppression, and the arbitrary uses of temporal power in any effort to coerce the mind of man. History as well as philosophy, should make them share the liberal's distaste for 'calling the cops.' "

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writing about such substantial figures as Oswald Spengler, Dostoievsky, Whitman, D. H. Lawrence and Rimbaud.

But this level of what we may call "lyric pitch" is not maintained. In between his chanting about the the writers who have meant most to him, Miller becomes nostalgic about his boyhood and wanders off about pseudo-philosophical problems which are not closely related to what has gone before. His writing then becomes platitudinous and surprisingly sentimental. It appears to be a fact that when a writer thinks clearly his prose itself is sharp and fresh, and when his thought becomes flaccid his words too become limp, mechanical and fogged.

THE years may have taken their toll; a writer such as Miller, a self-proclaimed pioneer and experimenter, must be constantly creative and "lively," a la Picasso, if he is to maintain a reader's interest; he can not rely on his education or tradition—on a framework beyond himself—to sustain him when he is tired or used up. The reason he cannot is apparent: his education is tattered and barely legitimate, he has no tradition except it be that of the European literary "desperado" such as Rimbaud, he has nothing, in fact, except—"Himself." Thus even in the spelling of the word we see the appropriation on the part of a man of what was traditionally given to God.

And yet—and here is where much of his value lies—Miller is no isolated example of this kind of extreme individualism; he merely had the courage or the foolhardiness to take it to a further limit than his American brother-writers had done during the same period. Much of Miller's genuine sting and point as a writer resided in the fact that in a time of intellectual experimentation and doubt he lay himself wide open to influences from every quarter, and in so doing was able to give voice to the sense of disgust or futility which many non-religious, non-traditional, "classless" modern men felt but did not express.

Henry Miller arrived in Paris penniless and was actually a beggar on the streets during the depression; as such he got to know intimately a kind of proletarian life which differentiated him from other American writers and gave him the outlook of a trans-Atlantic hobo, economically dispossessed, seeing life from the mongrel's point of view—the garbage-can is an all-night cafeteria!—and containing in that point of view some of the French workingman and the English sailor as well as the "artist" and the sentimental American. If we see Miller in this light, I believe, we can better appreciate what a focus he was for many diverse tendencies of that time: economic radicalism, bohemian life, Freud, surrealism, the want of faith everywhere—a patchwork which he wore with cocky ease, because it was sewed to-

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gether out of the rag-ends of experience he had lived through.

In later years, when his most significant imaginative work had been done, the ideas of this period still remained with Miller and it is these which have irritated the majority of his critics today, and have even led some very respectable ones to deny his literary value in toto. They have objected to his expansive ego, his tastelessness, his violent and often pretentious declamations, his "quaint" anarchistic tendencies. In the light of these and other criticisms we may ask a question: what is the value in being "unique" as a writer if much of that virtue is made up of carelessness, credulity, eccentricity, or the other less worthy features of Miller's work?

Let us answer this question: there is unarguable value in such a writer if his experience has been honestly faced, rendered artistically, and presents a picture of life which men can recognize as a truth that has not previously been expressed. If we may be permitted a basic reminder: no writer is perfect, but comparatively few in each generation have either the force or the penetration to impress widely-read people with new truths. If for no other reason, Miller is significant because his anger and robustness were strong enough in his early books to give us a vivid experience of what shapeless modern existence could become for us all—provided we retained enough of our humanity to preceive it, and enough of our sense of form to ache for its absence.

TO say this is not to excuse Miller's obvious limitations: like many inclusive writers, from Rabelais to Whitman, he can be exasperating because he does not limit himself to one subject or even to one medium—his novels are as much autobiography as Rousseau's *Confessions,* and they are as opinionated and dogmatic as any sermon. He delivers himself apocalyptically on subjects of which he seems to be semi-ignorant. He has taken too much to himself too greedily, and at the same time taken too much for granted, including the conceit that readers will find his personality as magical as he apparently finds it himself. These criticisms, as well as others offered by such shrewd critics as Philip Rahv and Louise Bogan, are valid and can not be over-looked.

But neither can we overlook what Miller gave to us: the vision of a grimmer bohemian or formless modern existence than had ever been given by another of our contemporary American novelists, and one whose values did not die, but became part of a netherworld of everyday life which one can find in this country and abroad as well. Were it isolated—limited to some exotic Paris of the imagination—we would be under no responsibility to take it seriously; but it was as much a warning as a testament, and many people in London, Berlin, Rome, New York and San Francisco are living today what Miller acutely experienced twenty years ago.

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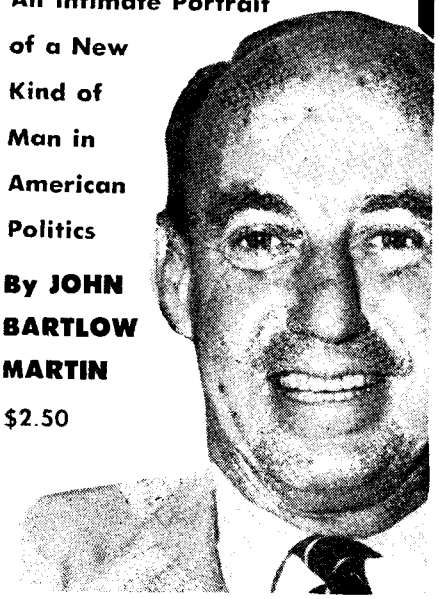

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BOOKS

A Cold Eye on the Best People

HEMLOCK AND AFTER. By Angus Wilson. Viking. $3.

By WALTER KERR

ANGUS Wilson's first novel is a complex and caustic saturnalia in which a bevy of the 'best people' are led through an erotic dance about the English countryside and then peremptorily skinned alive. Mostly, it seems to me, Mr. Wilson is busy devising a suitable hell for humanists.

The central figure in Mr. Wilson's steamy brew is novelist Bernard Sands, a man of formidable stature in British literary circles and a one-time humanist prophet. Sands is aware of the existence of evil, but he tends to see it outside himself—notoriously in the eruptions of a neighborhood pleasure-house run by an elderly, doll-like witch. It is in quite another light that he views his own aborted relationship with his wife, his artificial relationship with his children, his aberrant relationship with a younger man. These, to Bernard, are the sane, successful adaptations which an honest man makes to the human condition.

Through a series of shocks—the most important of which is not altogether convincing—Bernard Sands is made to face the fact of his own participation in evil, and to examine with horror the primitive indecency of some of his 'noblest' motives. Unable at last either to justify or to redeem himself, he is glad to die—the hemlock administered by his own mental and moral distress.

The theme is an imposing one, its development rigorously special. The concrete evidences of evil which fill the book are all of one kind: the immature explorations of naughty children, indulged by adults. The sober, high-minded homosexuality of Bernard is one pole—a maypole around which a shrill fairyland circles closer and closer. The soft, candy-box fleshiness of Mrs. Curry, whose temple of Eros is decorated by bare-bottomed cherubs, is another. Between them an extensive cast of characters takes up a variety of insinuating postures: the on-the-make young Cockney, Ron, who is willing to work either side of the bed; the middle-aged architect, Herbert Rose, who is desperate to renew the pre-sex games he once played with his little sister; and so on.

When the movement of these figures is away from sex, it is still toward the fantasies of adolescence: young Eric Craddock imagining himself a Medici choir-boy; his mother playing the role of tragically wasted belle; Bernard's brother-in-law dreaming of the books he will write; Bernard's daughter weaving a smartly protective cocoon in revenge for a lost childhood. The evil with which *Hemlock and After* is exclusively concerned is evil that began in the Darling nursery; its devil is Peter Pan; its psychic direction is always toward Never-Never Land.

The pattern is so consistent that it cannot be anything but deliberate. And it would seem to be linked, in Mr. Wilson's mind, with that rosily reasonable, cheerfully materialist humanism which so captured the imagination of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Much is made of the happy, healthy future to which these enthusiasts once looked forward. The sole uncorrupted survivor, civil servant Charles Murley, is deeply puzzled that the dream should have worked out so badly. The promise of a brave new maturity has been deformed into its precise opposite. What Mr. Wilson seems to be saying is that our vaunted humanism has ended in infantilism.

This may be reading too much into the author's aseptic examination of some twenty-five malformed personalities. If so, I can only beg to be excused on the grounds that it is necessary either to put the two and two of Mr. Wilson's charade together—the humanism and the omnipresent infantilism—or to put the book aside as a brilliantly precise but cruel and inconclusive bit of casework.

Certainly Mr. Wilson writes per-

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ceptively. Indeed, the most distressing aspect of his novel is that he has created a perfectly recognizable world. We seem increasingly to live in it. The author has not invented it; he has set it down with cold accuracy, in a spirit nicely balanced between complacence and contempt. If his vision is limited, it is never altogether libelous. Whatever connection Mr. Wilson may wish us to make, we cannot quite gainsay the image.

The book has its stylistic and structural defects. The author's conscientious respect for the intricacies of human motive leads him, from time to time, into some labyrinthine prose. The cast of characters is labyrinthine, too: an identifying chart is offered at the beginning of the volume, and it is, unfortunately, quite necessary.

The particular form of atavism which shocks Bernard Sands into the beginnings of self-knowledge seems oddly irrelevant to the emotional plan of the work as a whole. The narrative surface—having to do with a vague plan of Bernard's for establishing a young writers' sanctuary—seems lightweight for the suicidal despairs it must bring into focus.

But there are highly successful effects: Bernard's dilemma, once it is fully under way, is painfully real; the panicky relationship between the novelist's daughter and a tormented young artist is curiously convincing; above all, the neurotic underground in which Bernard's wife passes her days is made chillingly graphic.

As you may have gathered, "Hemlock and After" is not exactly an attractive book. Since it paints a society in which not even sin has stature, it necessarily falls short of being an important one. But its limitations are not entirely self-imposed; to a degree, they are inherent in what is optimistically called our 'way of life'—in the sensual and sentimental utopia we have labored to construct. We do make the beds on which our principal novels take place.

If the artist, in his descent into the abyss, finds the abyss merely messy, it is possible that we have as much to answer for as he does.

The Measure of Hemingway

HEMINGWAY: THE WRITER AS ARTIST. By Carlos Baker. Princeton University Press. $4.50.

By PATRICK F. QUINN

PERHAPS the most important generalization that can be made about modern literature, fiction as well as poetry, is that its method is dramatic rather than expository. It seeks not to explain but to *imply*.

Some day this axiom will be taken for granted. Ignoring it, many people are baffled by the apparently inflated reputation of Hemingway. The man can write—obviously. But what a narrow range, and how little depth! The smallness of his talent compels him to deal with sensational material. His writing is almost invariably concerned with war, sex, and violence. No doubt these sub-

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jects have an immediate and widespread interest, and so the man's audience is large. But Hemingway's great weakness is that he can treat his material only on a primitive, non-intellectual, amoral level. There are no mature values in his work. One misses ideas, ethics, high seriousness. And so what is he, really, but the prince of pulp-writers; and how is it that a professor at Princeton has published this detailed and enthusiastic study of what Hemingway has done?

The book was written for two reasons. For one, to correct such misunderstandings as that crudely outlined above. And, positively, to state a full case for Hemingway as one of the major talents of our time. The man's legendary personality, the details of his biographical and literary careers—these matters are given no special emphasis, although Carlos Baker is evidently as well-informed about them as anyone around. He makes available a good many new and interesting facts about Hemingway, but he presents them economically and intelligently so that the accent throughout the book will remain in steady accord with its subtitle: the writer as artist. Baker's purpose, finally, is to get at the vital center of Hemingway's art. Most readers and critics, he rightly thinks, have seen only its hard and brilliant surfaces.

They have seen Hemingway variously as a naturalist, a primitivist, a bar-room nihilist. Or, with more sophistication, as the writer who fulfills De Tocqueville's century-old prophecy that American literature would be shaped (and hence misshaped) by the brassy criteria of American journalism. Baker explodes these errors, and up in smoke with them goes the notion that Hemingway had his brief moment of success only when he wrote as the tightlipped mouthpiece for "the lost generation." The labels that have customarily been pasted on Hemingway and his work are shown up for what they are: attempts to dispose of a new and original writer, made by people who never acquired the ability to read him properly.

In his effort to redress the balance, Baker has written a useful,

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illuminating book. His great virtue as a critic is that despite his warm devotion to the subject he does not fall back on rhapsodic gusto as a substitute for thought and analysis. The cards are all on the table. If Baker's first premise is that Hemingway's literary technique is one of indirection and suggestion, his second premise, equally sound, is that his own technique must be one of explanation and discussion.

Inevitably, a critical study of this sort cannot be uniformly convincing, and it would be foolish to demand otherwise. There are many fine pages throughout the volume, but especially in its first half, where the discussion is concerned with Hemingway's early work, from the first stories through *The Green Hills of Africa*. Baker defines very nicely the persistent themes of Hemingway, explains the use that is made of understatement and non-literary symbolism, illustrates how the deceptively simple style acts to charge the stories with meaning. He shows, too, how a serious and coherent aesthetic animates the work of a writer too easily thought of as intellectually bankrupt.

All this is to the good, and there can be no doubt that Baker supports his major contentions very cogently. But occasionally we meet with the usual extravagances that seem to characterize modern criticism. Speaking of "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Baker would have us believe that at the climax of this story "the oncoming horns of the buffalo are the prolonged forceps for Macomber's moral rebirth." The forceps business seems a bit forced; and so does the interpretation given a detail in *Across the River and Into the Trees*: "Renata's square emeralds have likewise a double function. They are the stones of Venice . . .," etc.

These are specimen demurs that a reading of this book is bound to give rise to. Yet however one may take exception to such details or to the general appraisals which are made of Hemingway's various volumes, Baker's criticism as a whole commands and rewards attention. The brief he argues is a sound one and he argues it well, with lucidity and usually with tact. To disagree with it, as one must sometimes do, is itself a rewarding exercise in framing literary judgments. Only an able critic can write a book which, like this one, is sharp enough to cut both ways.

Led by a Kindly Light

NEWMAN'S WAY: The Odyssey of John Henry Newman. By Sean O'Faolain. Devin-Adair. $4.50

By WILLIAM P. CLANCY

JOHN Henry Newman once affirmed that for him there existed two (and only two) obviously self-luminous beings: himself and God; and for his epitaph he chose a motto which underlined his constitutional disbelief in the reality of material things in the face of eternal spiritual value: *ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*.

Mr. O'Faolain's study of Newman's "way," from his earliest childhood up to his submission to the Roman Catholic Church, is a brilliant inquiry into the basis of his subject's genius and lifelong isolation. "There can have been few more lonely men in the world than the aging Newman," O'Faolain writes in his epilogue. Indeed, there can have been, because there can

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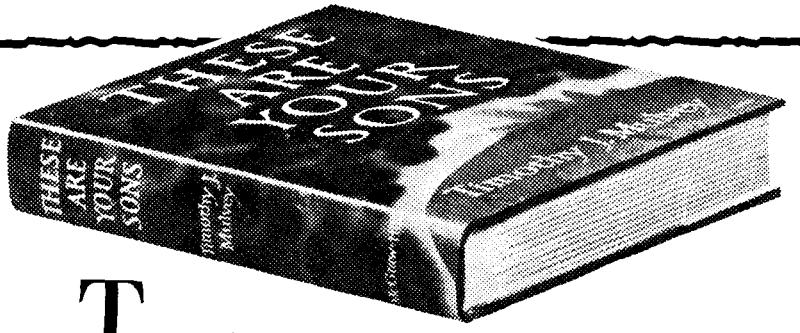

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have been few more lonely in their youth.

This present work, with a rare combination of original scholarship, imagination, sensitivity and humor, indicates why, in a certain sense, Newman's "odyssey" never ended, until, after ninety years of life, he finally passed from those "shadows and images" which were his constant present into that Truth which only eternity could fully reveal.

Newman's "way" was, of course, the pursuit of spiritual reality through the all-surrounding material shadows. This pursuit left him no time for the ordinary comforts with which men console their loneliness. He was the eldest of six children, the son of a generous but bankrupt father and a loving but piously evangelical mother. He loved his family deeply and genuinely, but he was never completely at home within its circle. "Noli me tangere" was implicit in his attitude.

And so, despite his real love for his mother, he could not bear, even as a youth, any open display of familiar affection from her, and his love for his father was frequently spoiled by his pious disapproval of the elder Newman's loosely jovial and irresponsible personality. His progress was thus an unwilled but constant withdrawal from the sympathy of familial attachments.

At fifteen, young John Henry, preparing to leave school for a vacation at home, confided thoughts like the following to his journal:

> In a few days I must go home. Then Satan will leap upon me with new though familiar enticements. Give me strength that I may defeat the world, the flesh, and the devil. Especially watch over me that I may not yield to the enticements of the world, lest drawn too much by its songs, dances and allurements I prefer these things to my God . . .

Welcome home, young Newman! There seems little danger that you will ever sing or dance too much.

Newman was essentially "an emotional man dominated by his intelligence," O'Faolain believes, and this is probably a generally just appraisal of an amazingly complex

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man. Newman was not "cold." He loved and cared and suffered deeply all his life. But as his great intelligence became ever more exquisitely refined it tended more and more to limit the range of his emotional commitments. The great affections of his life were born of his intellectual and spiritual pilgrimage. Hurrell Froude and Ambrose St. John (the two human beings he loved best), were both companions on this pilgrimage, and it was only with such fellow travelers that Newman could feel completely at ease. His family, unable to accompany him, grew ever dimmer, and the pilgrim himself seemed more lonely at each step.

Newman's youth and young manhood is treated with neither undue solemnity nor irreverent levity in this remarkable book. For all his great endowments of mind and soul, John Henry Newman was not always an easy man to love. He was certainly a genius and possibly a saint, but he was sometimes also an eccentric and, especially in his youth, an undeniable prig.

Sean O'Faolain succeeds in capturing a previously little known completeness in his study. He may add little to our knowledge of Newman's towering meaning in the spiritual and intellectual drama of our time, but he reveals with brilliance and sympathy the personal genesis of "that brave, kind, solitary, gifted, tormented angel" in whose mission many of his contemporaries, and many in our own generation, have so passionately believed.

Viereck Poetry

THE FIRST MORNING. New Poems. By Peter Viereck. Scribners. $3.

By ANNE FREMANTLE

DR. VIERECK is staying young too long. His 'new poems' (section III, The Birth of Song, contains seven old ones 'revised and retitled') are still full of promise; but by now, in his thirties, he should have backed them up with performance. Instead, he gives us imitations of himself "The Calving Iceberg's Dark Night of the Soul, *à la manière de P.V.* (in his most pretentious and humorless style)" or 1912-1952 Full Cycle, III. From the Sublime to the Meticulous in Four Stages.

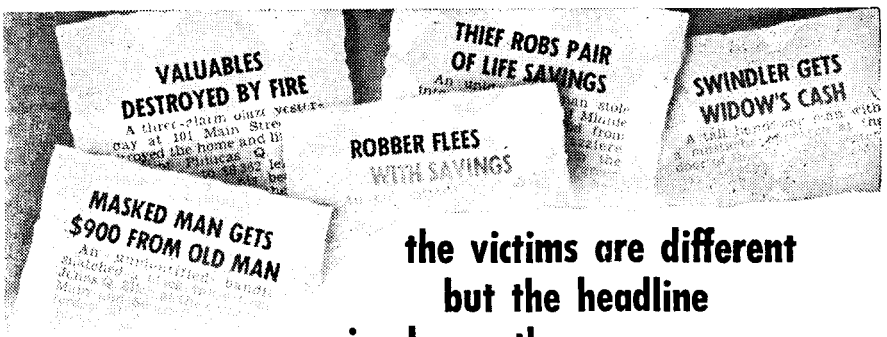
DANTE: We were God's poets.

BURNS: We were the people's poets.

MALLARME: We were poet's poets.

TODAY (preening himself): Ah, but *we* are critic's poets.

Worth saying, perhaps; but hardly worth a whole page (87) out of one hundred and sixteen, many of which are barely better covered. Dr. Viereck is best when he is most donnish: "Arethusa; the First Morning," a Phi Beta Kappa poem, is admirable, and "Stanzas in Love with Life and August" has a wonderful terror, recalling Ephraim Mikael's great sonnet, in its surface-banal refrain: "a pair of slight tennis shoes is hurrying by in August." But too many of the poems are marred by Dr. Viereck's combined will to preach and to be pert, which is, frankly, a pity.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A Mellower Waugh

MEN AT ARMS. By Evelyn Waugh. Little, Brown. $3.50.

By SERGE HUGHES

EVELYN Waugh's latest novel, the first of a planned trilogy, may not appeal to as great a number of readers as have some of his previous works. It is not concerned principally with stupidity, shallowness and foibles, so that the many who rejoice in Waugh's corrosive sarcasm will find the fare much too bland. Nor does it preoccupy itself with soul-searching, inner torment and the grave problems of grace, so that those who have been very willing and quite content to let novels take the place of theological treatises will find the tone of the novel relatively disappointing and superficial.

The novel busies itself with the second World War, and its impact on the English. It is the story of the effect of that war on a number of people who surround the hero, Guy Crouchback. It is a good story well-told. I do not know whether Waugh has even written any better novel, but I do know that he has written none in such a tranquil and serene spirit, none in which he is more at peace with the world.

Not that any deep changes have occurred in Waugh or that he has altered any convictions. No. But he does give signs in this work of transforming his genius for sarcasm, a hopelessly narrow and overestimated way of moralizing, into the much rarer and more difficult genius for irony, that Christianized sarcasm. That is, he deals with his creatures in this novel with proper ironic commitment, something far more difficult than the vaunted ironic detachment. This attitude probably explains the humor in these pages, which is among the best Waugh has produced.

It is also surely in keeping with this spirit that Waugh should make the hero of Guy Crouchback a knight of the Middle Ages who after setting out from England on a Crusade, dies in Italy in a skirmish between two rival towns. Waugh may tend to romanticize the nobility of the

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Middle Ages (and occasionally he has given reason to believe that he does) but there is no indication of it in these pages.

All the traditional Waugh virtues are present here. The virility which can dispense with sexual proofs and four-letter words, or that at least does not depend on them. The deeply felt love of country which needs no self-illusion for it to grow. The exquisite feeling for understatement, and the art of writing equally well whether about the most tedious and humdrum aspects of military life or the most extraordinary adventures, such as the description of a raid on Dakar in which the trophy is a severed head of a Colonial policeman —"lifted up by the wool." As for the hero, it will be good for him when the other parts of the trilogy appear, for in this work he is completely overshadowed by the incredible figure and name of Apthorpe, fellow-in-arms and tragi-comic figure extraordinary. I wonder whether *he* shouldn't be the hero. He is, really.

REVIEWERS

Walter Kerr, who until recently wrote The Stage for this magazine, is now drama critic for the N. Y. Herald Tribune.

Patrick F. Quinn is a member of the English department at Wellesley College.

Serge Hughes teaches at St. John's University, Brooklyn.

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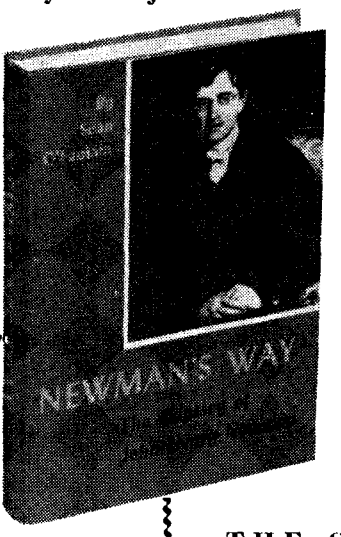

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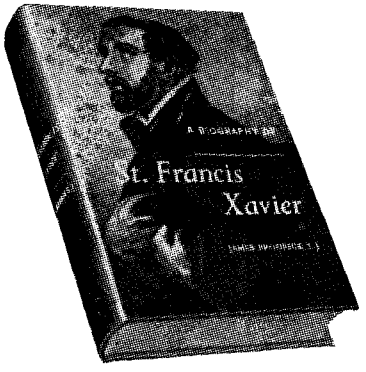

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